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SPINECHILLER
Collection

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DANGER ISLAND



here were a lot of reasons why tourists visited Lake
Wintoma. Decker Island, however, wasn't one of
them. It was a small, bleak circle of land just off the
far eastern shore of the otherwise gorgeous lake.

The island was, more accurately, a peninsula, but
even during the dry season, the boggy tongue of land that
connected it to the mainland was usually under five centimetres
of water. Locals called it "Danger Island" because of the hazards
it posed. Incredibly overgrown, the place was a haven for snakes
and insects... and Dr Rowan Decker.

Dr Decker was a paleobotanist, a scientist who studies ancient
plants, and he was the only person who chose to live on the
peninsula. He had settled there twenty years before, and had
built a secluded home. For the most part he kept to himself...
except on the first and third Saturdays of every month. On those
days he made the hour-long drive around the lake to the town
on the west shore, to stock up on supplies.



During his visits, he regularly stopped for a snack at the corner café where he was often joined by several of the local kids. He entertained them with strange tales of his worldly travels. Decker knew about all kinds of bizarre things, and he would captivate the kids for hours.



One day he was in town talking to John and his friends, Rodney and Heather, about a strange plant he'd come across in his studies, called the rafflesia.

"It is the largest flower on the planet... just over one metre across," Decker said, spreading his arms to show the size.

"It must be really beautiful!" John said in awe. No one he had ever met told better stories than Dr Decker.

Decker curled up his lip in a playful smile. "Well, you might think so, but some people aren't quite so enthusiastic about it.

You see, many people claim that the rafflesia smells an awful lot like rotting meat."

"Oh, come on," Heather scoffed, wrinkling her nose. "What kind of flower would smell like that?"

"One that was pollinated by flies," Decker answered seriously. "They like the way it smells! But I've seen even odder things," he continued.

"Like what?" Rodney asked.

The scientist leaned forwards. "Like plants that eat meat... plants that strangle the life out of other plants... and a gooey, plant-like life-form that can move from place to place!"

John frowned. "I've read about meat-eating plants, like Venus's-flytrap. They trap insects between their leaves and then dissolve the bodies for food. They're not all that special. But I've never heard about the others. Are they real?"

Decker nodded with assurance. "They're real all right. In fact, I have samples growing on the island. The strangling fig, for example, is a vine that climbs over and eventually chokes a tree. It

usually grows in rain forests, but I've had luck transplanting such vines to several areas near my lab."

"What about the gooey thing that moves?" Heather asked.

"Slime moulds," Decker answered. "Yes, they grow here. They're found in damp, dark places... like under a log... or perhaps a basement. A slime mould consumes tiny living things, such as bacteria, by enveloping them."

"Cool!" John exclaimed. "Like the Blob in the movies, that thing from outer space."

"Yes. But if my theories are correct, these things were even more impressive in the past. Perhaps, millions of years ago, a distant larger relative of the modern slime mould had a taste for much bigger game."

A faraway look settled on Decker's face. "We could learn so much about how life on Earth developed if we could study those ancient plants," he said. "The work would be dangerous – the plants might be difficult to control – but it would be worth it. I have worked hard to peel away the centuries genetically. And I am very close to completing my work."



A week later, on the school playground, John crept up behind Heather, who was sitting on the lawn, engrossed in a book. In his hand he cradled a container of tapioca pudding. Heather didn't notice John until he tipped the pudding on to her hand and yelled, "The Blob has come to get you!"

Heather jumped up, screaming, and



flicked the gooey mess from her hand, while John and Rodney shook with laughter.

"You idiots!" she yelled, trying to suppress a smile.

"The attack of the mutant slime mould begins," Rodney snickered, handing her a tissue from his own lunchbox.

"Sorry we scared you," John said, unwrapping his sandwich. The three kids ate their lunch and talked about everything from football practice to homework, but eventually the conversation drifted back to Dr Decker and his weird plants.

"I'd love to see Dr Decker's slime mould," said Rodney. "I wonder what he meant by bigger game."

"Humans," John said, laughing.

There was another moment of silence as everyone munched on their sandwiches. Then John had an idea.

"Maybe we could see the slime mould," he said excitedly.

"What do you mean?" Heather mumbled with a mouth full of sandwich.

John rubbed his chin. "We could visit Dr Decker's lab."

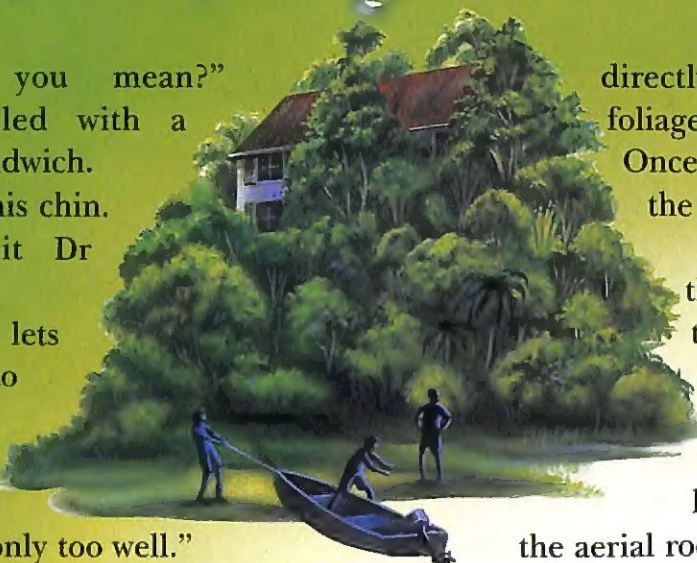
"But he never lets anybody come to the island," Rodney said matter-of-factly.

"You know that only too well."

John smiled. "We could pay a surprise visit, though."

"He wouldn't like that one bit," Heather warned.

"He wouldn't have to know, Heather," John replied.



On the first Saturday of the following month, John, Heather and Rodney stood on the dock of the west shore.

"It'll only take about twenty minutes to get across by boat," John assured his friends. "It takes three times that to drive around the lake. By the time Dr Decker gets to town, buys his supplies, and drives home, we can get to the island and back. Don't you want to see what he's got over there?"

"Yeah," Heather agreed, jumping into the boat.

Rodney hesitated, but only for a moment. Then he shrugged and climbed aboard, and the three left the shore.

The only way to approach Decker Island was through a boat channel that ran

directly into the dense foliage of the east beach. Once there, the kids pulled the boat ashore.

"The house is over there," John pointed towards a two-storey brick structure, half hidden by gigantic trees. Rodney tied a line from the boat to

the aerial root of a mangrove tree. Only a sliver of sandy beach separated them from the jungle of bizarre green plant life that populated most of the island.

Once at the house, John found an open window on the first floor so the children slipped inside. The silence pressed in on them like a blanket. The air was heavy and damp.

"I think the lab is downstairs," John whispered. Moving quickly, they found the basement laboratory and began to explore. There seemed to be hundreds of plastic and glass jars filled with samples of plant life gathered from the island and the surrounding lake waters.

"Yuck!" Rodney held up a jar filled with some disgusting green goo. "What do you think this is?"

"Your lunch," Heather answered with a devilish grin.

After searching for a while, John gave a deep sigh. "I guess it wasn't really true. I don't see anything here that is all that unusual." He glanced out of the window. "It must be getting late. We'd better head back." He walked towards the basement stairs, when Rodney suddenly let out a loud yelp.

"OWWWW! I stubbed my toe!"

"On what?" John asked. He lifted the wrinkled rug under Rodney's feet. "Look at this!"

A tiny handle stuck up from the floor. It was attached to a small, wooden trap-door. Tugging on the handle, John gazed down into a dark opening.

"There's another level," he whispered, grabbing a torch from nearby. "Let's see what's down there."

"I get to go first," Rodney demanded. "We wouldn't have found the door if I hadn't stubbed my toe."

John handed over the torch, and the trio climbed down the wooden stairs, the soggy boards creaking under their weight. Once at the bottom, Rodney stepped out on to the concrete floor and shined the torch from side to side.

"It's empty," he announced, moving farther into the room. "There isn't a thing down here."

John and Heather stepped down. "The floor feels funny," Heather observed.

A peculiar slurping sound echoed through the large room. Rodney turned the torch towards the ground. "What in the...?" But before he could finish, a thick finger of gooey reddish slime encircled his foot. John watched in stunned silence as the jelly-like ooze continued to slither up his friend's leg.

Rodney began to beat at the sticky goo with the torch. In the rocking beam of light, John could see that the entire floor was covered by a thick layer of the pulsating muck.

"The slime mould!" he screamed. "We've got to get out!" He pushed Heather back towards the sagging staircase, but when he turned to reach for Rodney, he saw only a quivering mass of crimson

slime. From somewhere deep within, his friend uttered a final scream.

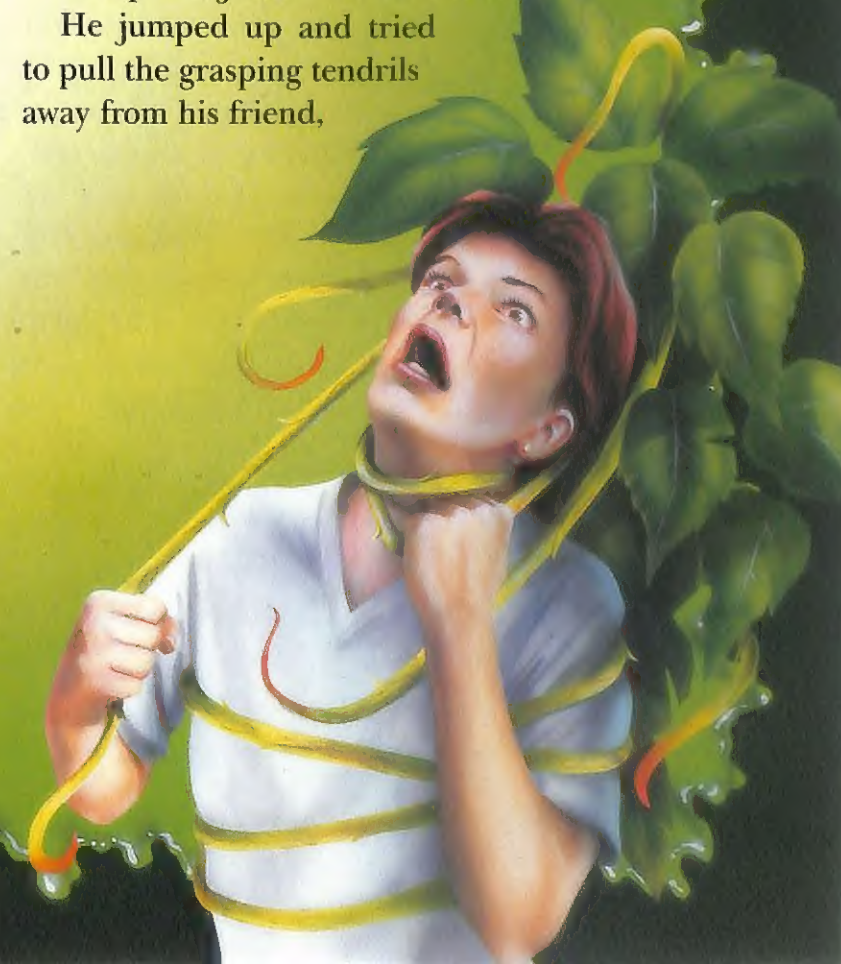
John felt a slimy thread grasping at his own ankle. With a cry, he leaped for the stairs and clambered to safety, slamming the trap-door behind him.

"Let's get out of here!" he shrieked to Heather. Together they climbed through the open window and sprinted for the shore. John thought that his heart would burst from the strain. Once on the beach, Heather fell sobbing to the sand as John worked with shaking hands to free the boat. The tiny craft had drifted farther into the undergrowth and John had to clear away the leaves and vines that clogged their escape. But the harder he worked, the more tangled the boat became.

Suddenly John heard a frantic wail. He lifted his gaze to see Heather wrapped in a web of vines that hung from a nearby tree. The more she struggled, the more the web tightened.

"Help me, John!" she shrieked.

He jumped up and tried to pull the grasping tendrils away from his friend,

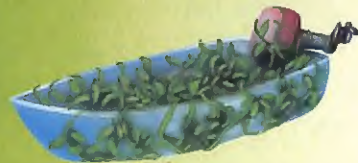


but for every vine he grabbed, two more whipped in to take its place. Heather disappeared before his eyes into a tangle of vegetation. Helplessly, he listened to her last muffled squeals.

With tears flowing down his cheeks, John stared at the boat. It was covered with the deadly vines. Some lay perfectly still. Others twitched slightly as if waiting for him to approach.

John set his face in determination.

"The bridge," he said aloud, remembering how Dr Decker had once described a low bridge he had built across the bog so that he could drive his four-wheel jeep to the mainland even during the rainy season.



Setting out for the south side of the island, John didn't take long to reach the escape route... or to see that it was impassable. Deadly vines covered the entire surface of the rough wooden structure. On either side of the bridge, the muddy, sopping bog stretched out into the distance. It was probably filled with snakes and who knows what else, but it was the only way off the island. It was his only chance.

Taking a deep breath, John took a step into the muck and sank to his ankles. He tried another step, and another, and even though the water was only a few centimetres deep, it was almost impossible to move. He was stuck. Pulling up hard on his leg, his foot suddenly wrenched free, but his shoe

stayed behind in the dark, stinking mud.

Afraid of what might be waiting unseen in the sludge, John hesitated to take another step.

"This is impossible," he moaned. Then he noticed a pair of huge, oval green leaves that looked as if they were floating just at the surface of the bog. He'd seen leaves like that, but smaller, somewhere before. He couldn't remember where. They looked a little like a gigantic

lily pad. He recalled Decker telling him about water lilies in the Amazon jungle that could actually support the weight of a child.

Shading his eyes against the glare of sunlight on the water, he saw that there were several of the lily pad-type plants. They formed an almost continuous, living bridge to the opposite shore.

"It might work," he said to himself with renewed hope. Carefully, he raised

his bare foot and stepped on to the plant. It seemed sturdy enough. John shifted his weight and hoisted himself on to the thick, spongy leaf. It sank a little way into the mud, but it did hold his weight. Slowly and carefully, he worked his way across the bog from leaf to leaf.

"I'm going to make it!" he thought, allowing a shiver of elation to course through his body. Just a few more steps and he would be on solid ground. He jumped to the next leaf, but his foot slipped out from under him. There was something coating the surface... something sticky... slimy. Struggling to stand, he slid towards the central vein of the strange double leaf. In a flash, the two halves slammed shut.

"Help!" he cried out to no one. He pushed with all his strength, but the leaves wouldn't budge. Then he tugged at the tough, sword-like spines that were criss-crossed along the edges of his emerald prison. It was no use. With a gurgling sound, a thick, sticky fluid began to bubble up around his ankles. Too late, John remembered where he had seen tiny plants similar to the one that now had him trapped.

"They're not all that special," he had said to Decker. But now, as the fluid rose higher and higher, he knew that he had been wrong. This Venus's-flytrap was indeed very special... and very hungry. He screamed out in terror, but there was no one near to hear.



THE END

OUR HAUNTED WORLD



We hunt out some scary snakes and spooky secrets in Peru...

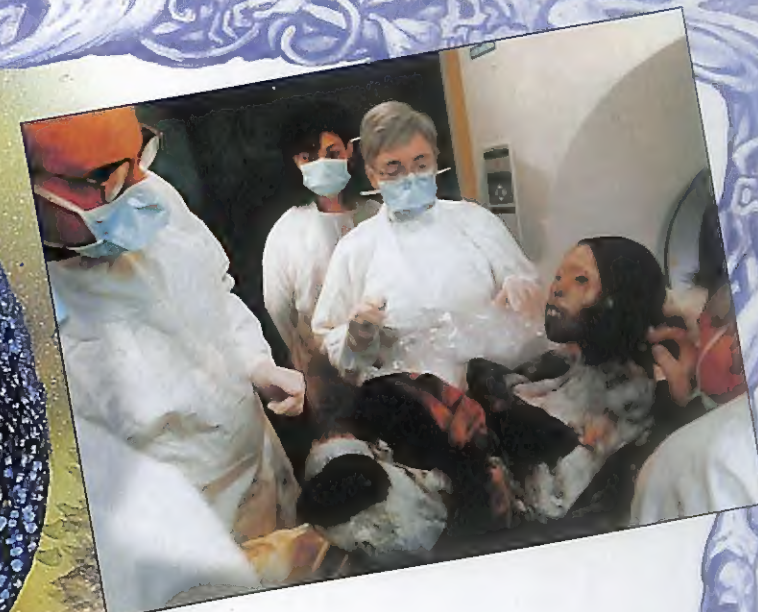
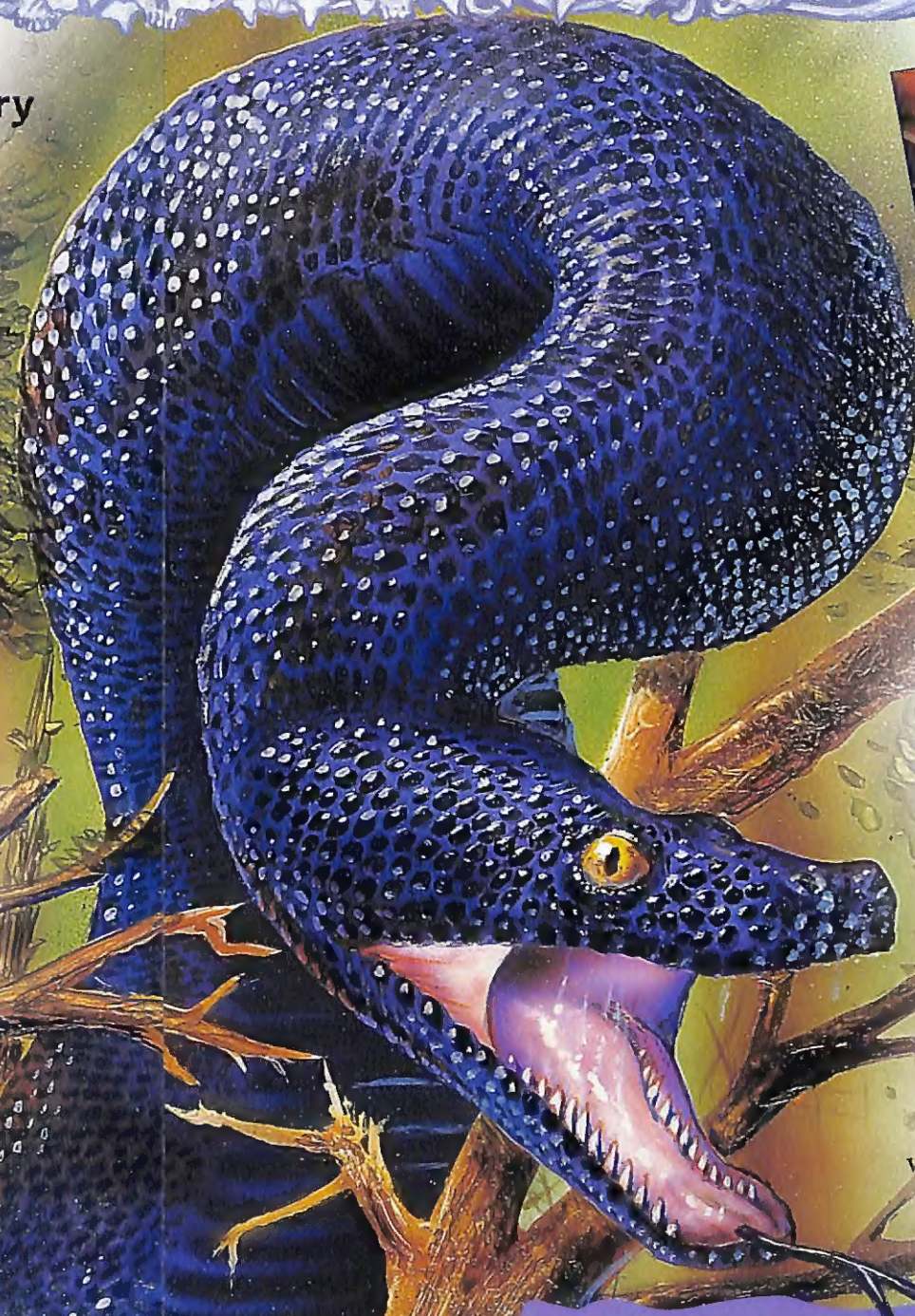
THE BIG BOA

In 1997, a snake the size of two buses was spotted slithering through the Amazon! Villagers reckoned the jet black boa constrictor was a record-breaking 40m long and 4.6m in diameter! It trampled down trees and left a ditch wide enough to drive a vehicle through, they said. After making a grand appearance, the boa made a big splash into the River Napo – never to be seen again. Only five people from the village of Nuevo Tacna actually saw it, but hundreds said they felt it move! But when news hit the airwaves, reporters joked that villagers must have mistaken the boa for a large lorry! According to locals, however, machinery of that sort is banned from the forest. The tale rumbles on!



SPOOKY SUMMIT

In 1911, a climber stumbled across a snake-infested city – on top of a mountain! Machu Picchu is totally invisible from below and, when it was built 500 years ago, the only entrance was through a single doorway! Once the inhabitants had climbed up, they never needed to go back down. The city had houses, jails, temples, a cemetery and abundant crops. There was even a solar clock which told them the time. Although a great deal is known about Machu Picchu itself, no one knows what happened to the inhabitants – few skeletons were found. Some 20th-century explorers claim the city is watched over by a guardian light that is shaped like a person with a big round head!

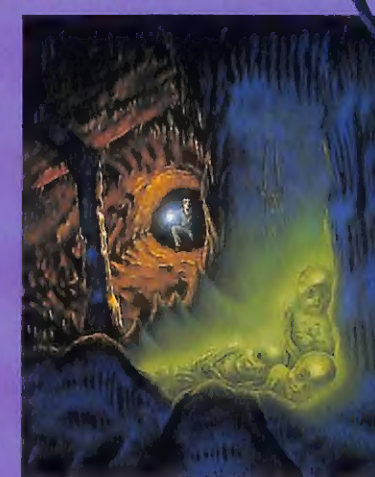


THE ICE MAIDEN

Dead bodies are usually buried underground but, in Peru, some (like the Ice Maiden above) have been found frozen on mountain tops! The Ice Maiden was discovered in 1995, wrapped in a cloth bundle, 7000m up Mount Ampato. Incredibly, she was almost perfectly preserved after 500 years! Her remains revealed some gruesome clues as to her last hours alive. Apparently, she ate a meal of vegetables six hours before she was clubbed to death! After that, she would have taken two weeks to freeze from the outside in! Tests on her clothing and body have also revealed vital information about her culture and who her living relatives might be!

LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH

In a creepy cave near Nazca, explorers have discovered a group of small mummies which glow in the dark. Reports say that, during the 1980s, anyone who touched them grew strange open sores on their fingers. Little else is known about the weird powers of the mummies. None of their victims wrote about their experiences. Perhaps their hands were too painful?

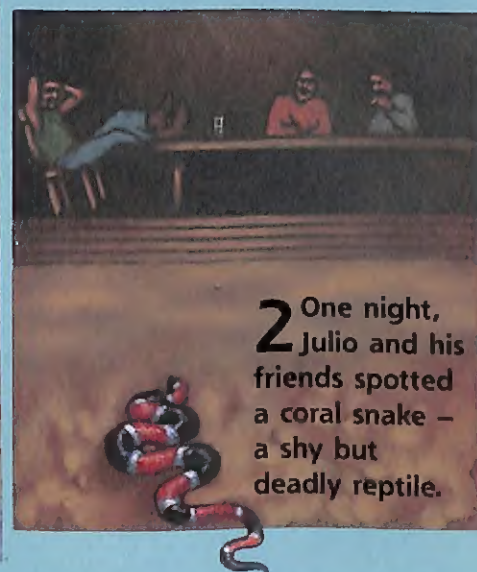


ONCE BITTEN!

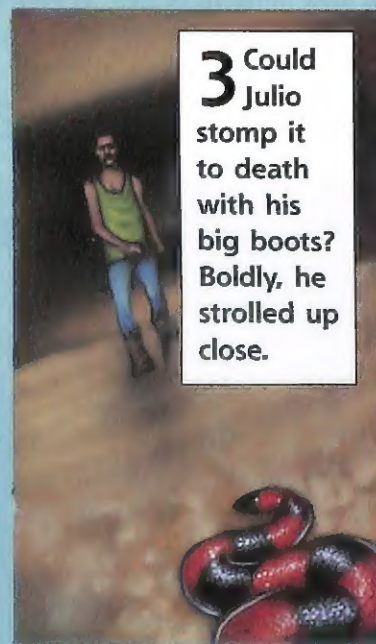
A friend of a friend knew a family who lived in the Nazca desert...



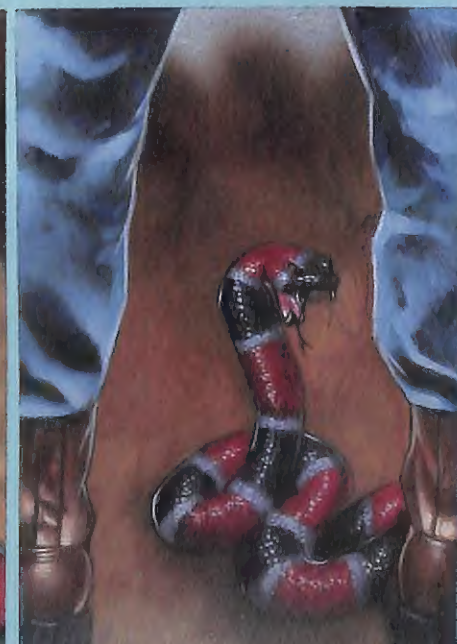
1 Julio was the bravest in his village, by far. He would do the dares and live to tell the tales.



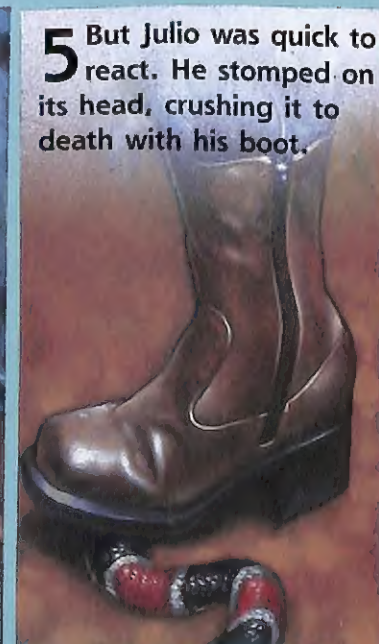
2 One night, Julio and his friends spotted a coral snake – a shy but deadly reptile.



3 Could Julio stomp it to death with his big boots? Boldly, he strolled up close.



4 The snake was not amused. It raised its neck and opened its gaping jaw.



5 But Julio was quick to react. He stomped on its head, crushing it to death with his boot.

6 Once again, Julio was granted his glory. But a few days later, out of the blue, his teenage son found him dead on the floor.

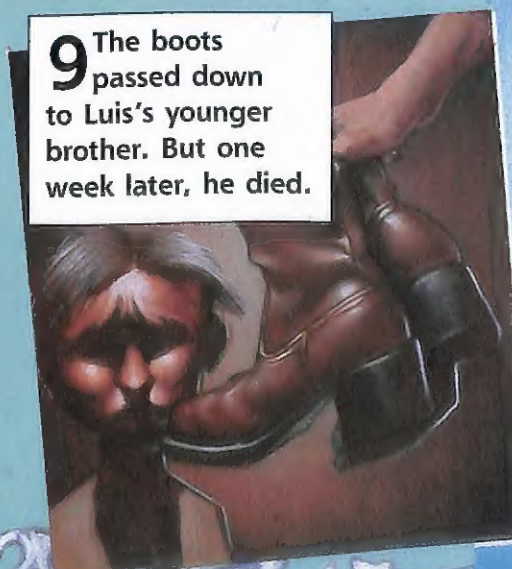


7 Keen to follow in his father's footsteps, Luis put on his big boots and headed out on horseback.

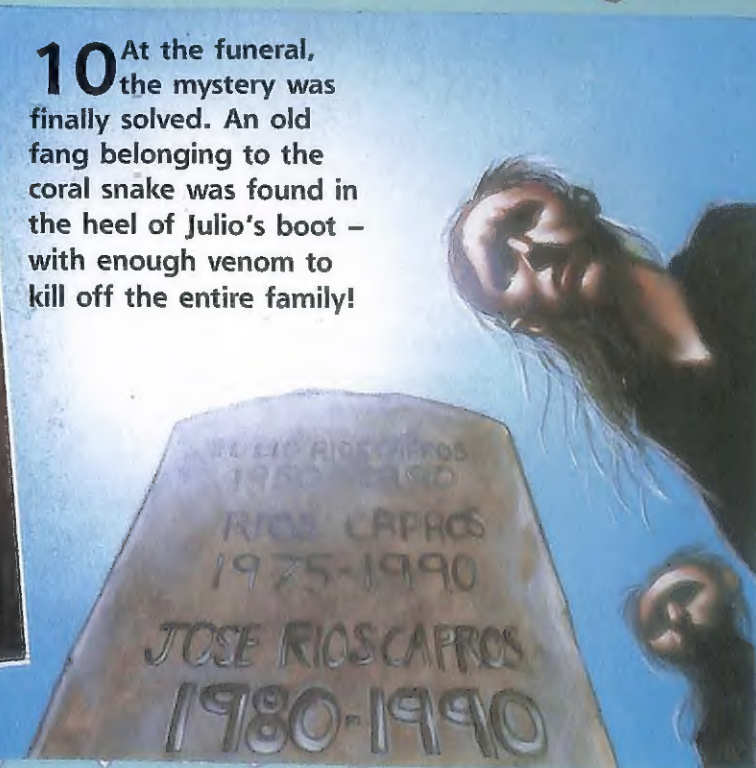


8 But two days later, the horse returned with Luis lying dead over the saddle.

9 The boots passed down to Luis's younger brother. But one week later, he died.



10 At the funeral, the mystery was finally solved. An old fang belonging to the coral snake was found in the heel of Julio's boot – with enough venom to kill off the entire family!



PILTDOWN MAN

Special Investigation File: 37

Subject: a scientific hoax

Place: Piltdown, East Sussex

SpineChiller creates a file

1912 'MISSING LINK' FOUND?

Amateur geologist Charles Dawson has unearthed fragments of an ancient human skull, together with what appear to be ape's teeth, near the village of Piltdown, East Sussex.

Dr Arthur Smith Woodward of the British Museum in London has confirmed that the finds are authentic. With Dawson, he has since found an ape jaw in exactly the same place. It seems that the mysterious 'missing link', with a human brain inside an ape's body, may have been discovered at long last.

Evidence no: 37/1
1861 cartoon of Darwin and an ape



NAME NOTIFICATION 1913

The British Museum has now allocated the following Latin name to a newly discovered species of human for the purposes of scientific classification:

Common name: Piltdown Man

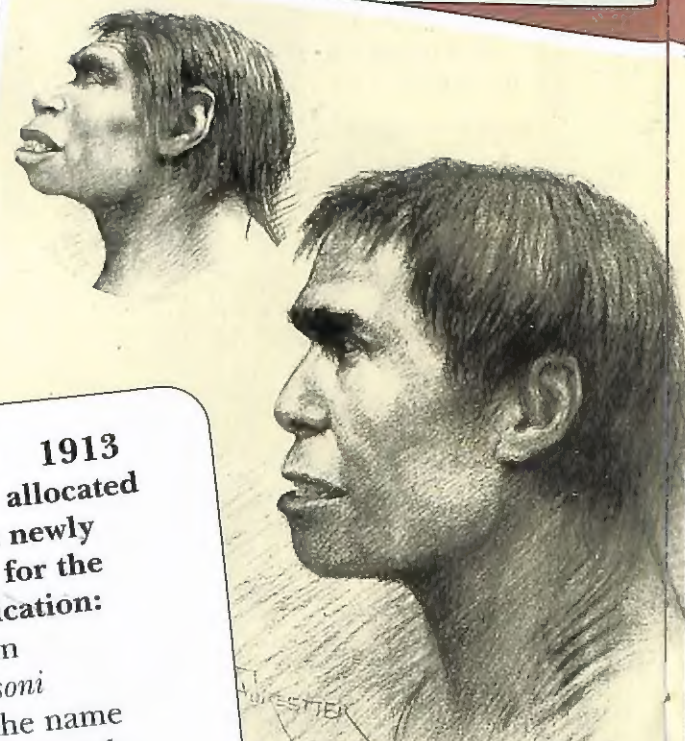
Latin name: *Eoanthropus dawsoni*

Comments: the first part of the name means 'dawn man', to indicate that the fossil is an early form of human. The second part commemorates the name of its finder, Charles Dawson.

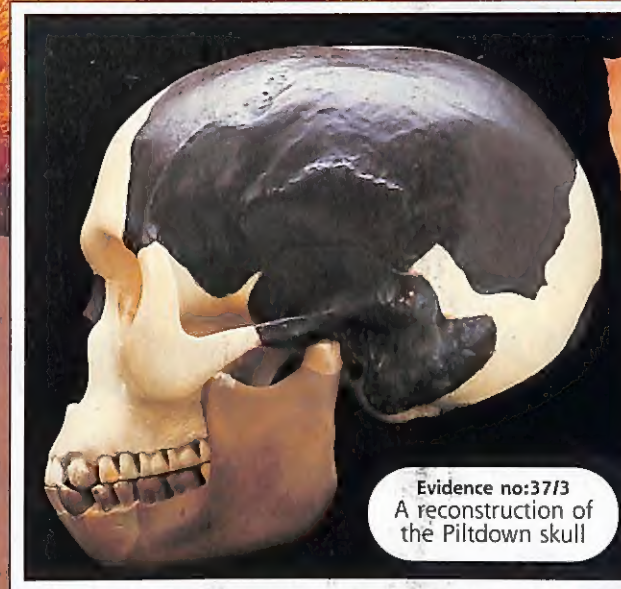
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1859, naturalist Charles Darwin published a book that contained a startling new theory. The book was 'The Origin of Species', and the theory evolution. According to this idea, animals have changed over time (evolved) to produce all modern species. Darwin's book also suggested that men and apes had evolved from the same ancestor.

Many people rejected Darwin's views about human origins. They pointed out that no fossils of the common ancestor – the 'missing link' – had been found. This remained true for over 50 years. Then a discovery was made that would fool experts for years to come.



Evidence no: 37/2
Dr Smith Woodward's drawings of what 'Piltdown Man' may have looked like



Evidence no: 37/3
A reconstruction of the Piltdown skull

**1953
IT'S A FAKE!**
An Oxford University scientist has proved that the fossil skull known as Piltdown Man – the 'missing link' – is a fake.

Doubts about the skull began in 1913, when David Waterston of King's College, London, stated that the jaw was like a chimpanzee's. In 1949, Dr K Oakley used a new dating technique to establish the age of all the Piltdown finds. They were only about 50,000 years old. Any 'missing link' would be thousands of years older.

Now Dr JS Weiner has proved the Piltdown teeth belong to a chimpanzee by filing and staining other chimp teeth to produce the same result. The human skull Weiner accepts is real. But the jaw is in fact an orang-utan's.

September 1955

Dear Piers

I have tried to discover who was responsible for the Piltdown hoax, as requested. Here are my conclusions:

1 As an amateur geologist, Dawson had the knowledge to prepare fossils that would seem to belong to the 'missing link'.

2 A visitor once saw Dawson staining bones in his office. This is how the Piltdown finds were made to look ancient.

3 Many Piltdown finds were made during Dawson's lifetime. But after he died, in 1916, the finds mysteriously stopped.

I can only assume that Dawson was guilty of deception.

Yours, as ever,

Julian

Unexplained



Evidence no: 37/4
Dr Smith Woodward (back row, far right) and Charles Dawson (back row, second from right) examining the Piltdown skull

CONCLUSION

'Piltdown Man' fooled many scientists for over 40 years. Today, dating techniques are much better than in the 1950s, so it is unlikely that a similar incident could occur. In any case, experts now believe that there never was a 'missing link' at all.

CLASSIC

SERIAL



Chapter 2

The Open Door

Retold from a story by Charlotte Riddell

The next morning, the postman came with letters from both Mr Carrison and my uncle. I thanked him very much for his trouble.

"It's no trouble at all, sir," he replied. "I pass by here every morning, on my way to her ladyship's."

"Who is her ladyship?"

"She's the Dowager Lady Ladlow," he answered, "the old lord's widow."

"And where is her place?" I enquired.

"Through the shrubbery, round about a quarter of a mile up the stream."

The postman departed. I spent the rest of the morning considering the open door,

examining it from within and without. So long as I was nearby, it remained closed. If I walked even to the opposite side of the hall, it burst from latch and bolt and swung wide. I could not lock it because there was no key. I was baffled.

At two o'clock, Lord Ladlow paid me a visit.

"You should be made aware of the rumours that there are about me," he said, as we walked in the park. "My uncle, the former Lord Ladlow, was murdered in that room. Many think I killed him. But I loved the old man. Even when he disinherited me for the sake of his young wife, I was sorry, but not angry. Then, when he wrote the will in my favour once more, I tried to persuade him to leave the lady a handsome sum, too."

"That night, my uncle was stabbed from behind in the neck, as he sat at his desk. After his death, his solicitors confirmed that he had made a new will, only three days previously, leaving everything to me. But that new will was never found. So my uncle's wife submitted the former will, which left her everything."

"Ill as I could afford to, I had to dispute the matter. The lawyers are at it still. I was soon linked with the murder, so, having lost my good name, I went abroad. While I was away, Mr Carrison took the Hall. Till I returned, I had no knowledge of the open door. This mystery must be cleared up."

As Lord Ladlow spoke, I remembered that "something" in the shrubbery. So I told him that I thought there had been someone prowling mysteriously about the place just the previous evening.

"Poachers," he suggested.

I shook my head. "I think it was either a girl or a woman."

After Lord Ladlow had left, I returned to the house, and that door. If I shut it once, I shut it a hundred times. Do what I would, it opened wide the instant that I turned away.

At about four o'clock, Lord Ladlow's daughter, Beatrice, arrived on horseback.

"Papa sent me with this," she said, as she put a letter in my hand.

The letter said: "Buy your food yourself. Keep it locked away. Get your water from the pump in the stable yard. I am going to London. Should you want anything, Beatrice will help you."

I at once borrowed Beatrice's pony and led him under the window of the locked room, to which the room with the open door led. Once the pony was in place, I stood on its saddle and looked in. The room was bare – there were no chairs or table, and no pictures on the walls.

"That is where the murdered man's valet slept," said Beatrice. "It was the valet who discovered him on the night that he was killed. Poor man. He died from the shock."

I returned Beatrice's pony to her and watched her ride off across the park. Then I turned back into the lonely house.

Although certain that nothing human was keeping the door open, I sensed I was not alone in the house. This was apparent from details – a chair and papers moved, clothes touched. I surmised that, while I was asleep or at the post office, someone had wandered around the house. I was about to



write to Mr Carrison for permission to break open the locked door when, early one morning, I spied a hairpin beside it.

Then it occurred to me. In order to solve the mystery of the open door, I must keep watch in the room to which it led.

It was a lovely morning. I opened the hall door to let in the fresh air. There, on the top step, I saw a basket full of fruit and flowers, with a card addressed to me. I selected a peach and ate it, but had barely swallowed the last piece when I remembered Lord Ladlow's message of caution. A strange taste lingered in my mouth. I smelled the fruit in the basket. It

Underlined words are explained in WORD POWER.



all had the same faint odour. I put some in my pocket and hurried away to visit the doctor in the village.

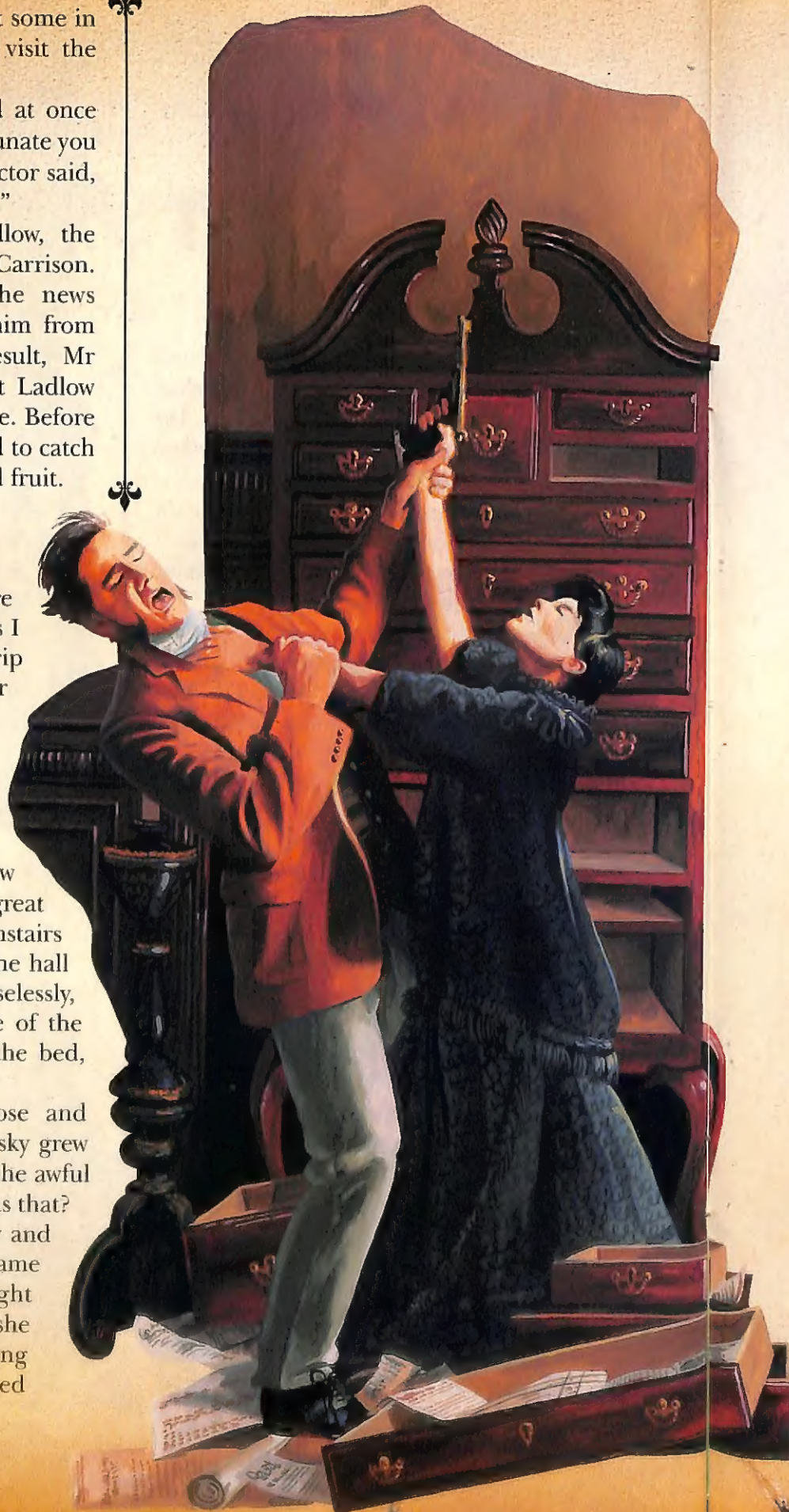
The doctor examined me and at once gave me some medicine. "It is fortunate you stopped at the first peach," the doctor said, "Someone has tried to poison you."

When I arrived back at Ladlow, the postman had left a letter from Mr Carrison. It enclosed ten pounds and the news that Lord Ladlow had released him from the terms of the lease. As a result, Mr Carrison no longer needed to let Ladlow Hall to me, so I could leave at once. Before leaving, however, I was determined to catch whoever had sent me the poisoned fruit.

The deep night shadows were closing over Ladlow Hall as I returned from my daily trip to the post office an hour earlier than usual. The moon had not yet risen. The house, silent and deserted, was as still as death.

I took a candle and went slowly up to my room, as though preparing to go to bed. Then I blew out the flame. Next, feeling a great thrill of terror, I slipped softly downstairs in the dark, went straight across the hall and in through the open door. Noiselessly, I made my way to the other side of the room, sat in an easy-chair near the bed, and hid behind a curtain.

Hours passed. The moon rose and crossed the sky. Then, at last, the sky grew lighter. Dawn was breaking. Soon the awful vigil would be over. Hush! What was that? The locked door opened suddenly and a slight woman dressed in black came into the room. She went straight across to the open door, which she closed and bolted. Then, glancing around, she produced a key, crossed



WORD POWER

Dowager – a 'dowager lady' is the widow of a lord. The title is used to distinguish her from the wife of the new lord, known simply as 'lady'.

valet – a personal manservant

surmised – worked out from the evidence

vigil – a watch, usually overnight

entreated – begged; pleaded

to the cabinet and opened it. I did not stir. She took out the drawers one by one and peered into the openings. What on Earth did she want? Then it struck me – SHE WAS SEARCHING FOR THE MISSING WILL!

I sprang from my hiding place and soon had her in my grasp. But, fighting like a wildcat, she tore free and ran toward the valet's room. I knew that if she reached it, she would escape. So I rushed after her, just caught her dress and dragged her back. Before I knew it, she had taken the revolver out of my pocket and fired.

She missed. I fell upon her and seized the weapon. She would not let it go. But I held her so tight that she could not use it. She bit my face. She tore at my hair. She turned and twisted about like a snake. I did not feel pain, only a deadly horror that my strength was giving out.

The woman made one last, desperate plunge. I felt my grasp slackening. She felt it, too, and tore free, at the same instant firing again blindly. Again, she missed.

Suddenly, there came a look of total horror in her eyes.

"See!" she cried, and fled.

I saw in a flash that the door she had bolted was open. There, beside the table, stood an awful figure with uplifted hand. Then I saw no more, but

felt something like red-hot iron enter my shoulder. At once, I fell senseless to the ground.

When the postman arrived later that morning and found that no one was stirring, he looked through the window. Inside, he saw me lying on the floor in a pool of blood. He was about to run to the farmyard to call for help when Lord Ladlow came riding up the avenue.

Together, they broke down the door, then laid me on the bed in that terrible room. I hovered between life and death for some time, but at length recovered sufficiently to tell Lord Ladlow all I knew.

It seemed that the Dowager Lady Ladlow had regularly been sending her maidservant to the Hall to look for the missing will. Only by finding and destroying it could the Dowager be sure to keep the fortune that she had inherited. It was the maid I had seen as she searched for the document. But the ghost of the former Lord Ladlow, whom she had murdered, never left her to search in peace. Instead it always entered through the open door to haunt her. Now I begged the new Lord Ladlow to search for the will himself.

"Break up the cabinet if necessary," I entreated. "I am sure the papers are there."

And they were. His lordship finally got the money and property that were rightfully his. But the scandal was hushed up and the crime went unpunished. As one condition of Lord Ladlow's silence, the Lady Dowager and her maid went abroad immediately and never returned.

I am happy now. But there are times when a great horror of darkness falls upon me and I cannot endure to be left alone.

THE END

NEXT ISSUE:

The Pit and the Pendulum by Edgar Allan Poe



STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES

In 1989, Graham Marden filled up his car at a petrol station near Southampton. He asked directions to the toilet, went in – but never came out! Eventually, the cashier used a master key to get into the toilet only to find it empty. Police arrived with dogs and searched the area, but the poor man was never found.

So, what happened to him? Did he just vanish into thin air? Or was some other mysterious force at work? Maybe the answer is stranger than the disappearance itself. In fact, over the centuries, ancient gods, fairies, government intelligence agencies and even UFOs have been blamed for various vanishings.

► **SPY TRAP**
Was Foreign Office official Benjamin Bathurst caught out spying – or was his disappearance more spooky?

HITTING THE HEADLINES!

Over a hundred years ago, a very strange disappearance case hit the headlines. In 1809, Benjamin Bathurst was on a mission for the British Foreign Office. He was preparing to leave the small town of Perleberg in Germany, but on the short walk from the inn door to the other side of his carriage Benjamin disappeared completely – and



▲ **POOR SUBSTITUTE**
According to folklore, fairies stole babies – leaving 'changelings' in their place.



forever! Should foul play have been suspected?

Another famous mystery is the case of the American band leader Glen Miller, who disappeared in a plane flying from France to England during World War II. Here foul play was never suspected, but the official line – that the plane was shot down – didn't convince everyone. No bodies or wreckage were ever found and rumour circulated that Miller survived, but was so horribly scarred he became a secret recluse! Was this a case of fans refusing to accept that their hero had been killed or was there any truth in the rumours?

▼ **FALLEN STAR**
Even the rich and famous have disappeared in ways that cannot be explained. Popular band leader Glen Miller's plane crashed – but why was no wreckage found?



▲ **MYSTERY CRASH?**
Record-setting pilot, Amelia Earhart was in radio contact up until the time her plane vanished. Was it mistaken for a spy plane and shot down?

Another strange mid-air disappearance is the case of Amelia Earhart. Amelia was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. However, she vanished over the Pacific Ocean on a round-the-world flight in 1937. No wreckage was ever found, and there was no official line. It remains a mystery.

VANISHED IN A FLASH!

Even more extraordinary are disappearances that are actually seen by other people, such as the case of James Worson in 1873. James had accepted a challenge to run 20 miles from Leamington to Coventry. Two friends followed in a horse-drawn gig to witness the run. Suddenly his friends saw James stumble and fall. He screamed as he fell, but his body never reached the ground. He disappeared in mid-air! Police were called, and a search was carried out. But the police dogs were too scared to go near the spot where he fell, and poor James Worson was never seen again!

More recently, Peter Williamson disappeared in July 1974, as he ran across his garden in Somerset,

England, during a thunder-storm. By the glare of a huge flash of lightning his wife and children saw him vanish in front of their eyes...

...HE CAME BACK!

The police were called and a thorough search was made but there wasn't a trace of Peter until he was found two days later, collapsed in the garden.

Peter had no memory of what had happened to him, but after a while he began to have dreams that seemed to recreate certain events.

In his dreams he woke up in a garden and made his way to a hospital. Then, after a couple of days, he felt better and returned to the garden.

From his dreams Peter knew the names of the doctor and nurse who had treated him and he tracked them down to the local hospital.

However, they swore they had never seen him before and their records showed this to be true.

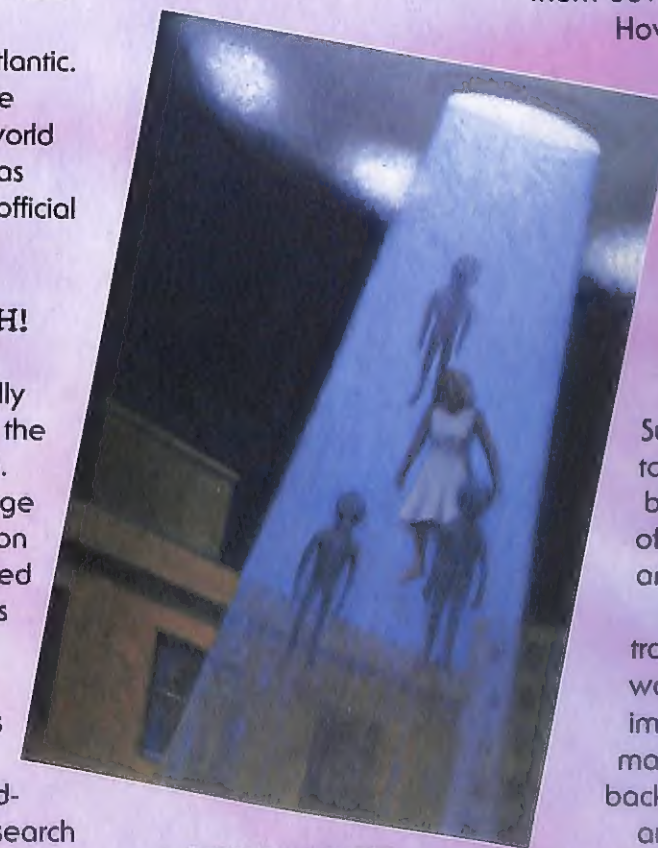
HOW OR WHY?

Could there be an explanation for these extraordinary disappearances?

Superstitious belief used to surround vanishings – but today the mysteries of science may hold the answer. Could it be that Peter Williamson was transported to a parallel world peopled by mirror images of ourselves, but managed to find his way back? Perhaps, too, aliens are responsible for total disappearances.

Some people claim to have been abducted by aliens but then returned to Earth.

Perhaps there are some less fortunate victims of spacenapping, who never get sent home. We will probably never know the full truth!



▲ **BODY SNATCHERS**
A painting depicting an alien abduction. The alleged victim was a woman from New York who temporarily disappeared.

HORROR HOUNDS PUZZLES

BAYING FOR BLOOD

If this pack of phantom hounds isn't creepy enough, unscramble all the letters on them to spell something else that you wouldn't wish to meet! But, be careful. Some letters are incomplete, upside-down and back to front!

ABRACADABRA!
Turn CAT into DOG, by changing one letter each time to create two words on the way! Then add the four floating letters to DOG and rearrange them all to find out what sound this unhappy ghost made!



CANINE CONUNDRUM

Unscramble the names below to discover ten different breeds of dog. How many dogs are silhouetted in the scene?

BRALROAD CHADDSHUN TINASALA LOPOED OUBHDLOODN
LOCIEL DHOUGYREN REBOX LAPSEIN GULLBOD

FEARSOME FACTS

So-called Black Shuck, also known as the Galley Trot, of East Anglia, is believed to be a huge, terrifying hound, with glowing eyes (some say a single one in the middle of its head) that bays as it bounds along at night.

PHANTOM FACTS

Tales of black horror hounds seem to abound in many parts of Britain. But there are other creepy canine accounts, too, such as one particular ghost at Heathrow Airport which has been reported as making a sound like a panting dog.



WILD DOG!

It comes from Down Under.
But what is it called?
Solve the riddle below
to find out.

The first letter's in DEADLY and DOG,
of course,

Now for the second, EVIL'S the source,

HAUNT and DEMON supply the next one,

The fourth is in GRUESOME, that's hardly fun!

The last letter to find rests in HORROR AND HOWL,

A final clue, it's also a vowel!

LOST FOR WORDS!
No wonder! This poor soul is being pursued by some demonic, canine creature! The man must work out the message on the door before it will open. Time's running out. Can you help him?

L	E	I	P
S	H	K	E
S	E	E	T
E	H	R	L

WEB SITE!

Identify the clues in the web. Say what they are. Only six can be prefixed by the word 'DOG'. Which are the odd-two-out?

FASCINATING FACTS

Some early cultures revered and even worshipped the dog. In world-wide mythology, however, it is sometimes linked with death!

FREAKY FACTS

Did a ghost dog save his master from a firing squad during the American Civil War? So one story goes. Although the dog died before the execution, its phantom form appeared to the officer in charge. He was so shocked he could not give the order to fire and the prisoner was later rescued by his own side.

ANSWERS

4: dog-ear; 5: dog-rose; 6: boot;
1: dogfish; 2: dog-tired; 3: boot;
WEB SITE! The odd-ones-out are 3 and 6.
LOST FOR WORDS! HELP I SEEK SHELTER.
WILD DOG! Dingo.
BOXER, SPANIEL, BULLDOG. There are 5 dog silhouettes.
ALASKIAN, POODLE, BLOODHOUND, COULET GREYHOUND.
CANINE CONUNDRUM: LABRADOR, DACHSHUND.
Also, the ghost 'GROANED'!
ABRACADABRA! CAT, COI, COG or DOT then DOG.
DYING FOR BLOOD, Werewolf.